

2.4 Nutrition, Food and Beverage Service Provided

Background

Good nutrition is essential to healthy living and enables children to be active participants in play and leisure. Education and care settings provide many opportunities for children to experience a range of healthy foods and to learn about food choices from educators and other children (*Early Years Learning Framework*, page 30; *Framework for School Age Care*, page 30).

Policy statement

This Policy details the Service's approach to mealtimes when the food and beverages consumed by children while at the Service are provided by the Service. It also describes the way educators use mealtimes for a happy and social occasion, and for developing lifelong healthy food choices.

Kitchen Management

Breakfast

- Parents who wish their children to have food at Acorn prior to morning tea time must arrive at the centre prior to breakfast finishing. Please see menu located in foyer for breakfast times.

Morning teas

- Fruit only, with the "very occasional" addition of dried fruit (i.e. sultanas)
- Kitchen to supply a minimum of four reasonable sized portions of four different fruits for each child.
- Each room to have an additional 25% for children who wish to eat more and also for staff. This to be monitored and adjustments made as there may be a supply variation for different rooms and days of the week. (i.e. more required by room "A" on a Tuesday than a Friday).
- All leftovers are to be returned to the kitchen by each room separately so that room amounts can be monitored and adjusted accordingly.

Food Storage

- Small portions of fruit, vegetables, etc. left over while cooking (i.e. piece of apple, piece of onion), not to be stored but rather used in some way in that days cooking or disposed of. For example, a recipe calling for a portion of onion, either use the remaining portion of the onion or dispose of it...Don't store it.

Cleanliness

- When the main chef leaves the kitchen unattended by leaving the premises, it must be left clean and presentable which means that all benches are cleared and wiped down. Prospective clientele are consistently being shown through the centre and therefore the kitchen must at all times represent the Acorn standard.

Balanced Nutritional Meals

- In keeping with good nutrition, all meals to have a balance of food types. (I.E Instead of pasta, potatoes and bread for one meal, substitute another vegetable for the potato.)

Strategies and practices

- The Service's *Nutrition, Food and Beverage Policy* is explained to parents at enrolment. QA 2.2.1
- At enrolment, parents provide the Service with details of their child's food and drink allergies and of any cultural preferences in food. The enrolment form has provision for parents to provide the Service with details of any special dietary requirements (e.g. allergies, culture, religion, food preferences). Parents are asked to update this information when any changes occur. QA 2.2.1
- The Service serves all of the children's food and drink requirements over the day – with the exception of babies' bottles. The food and drink are nutritious, appropriate to each child. The Service asks that parents do not bring food into the centre. QA 2.2.1
- The daily menu accurately describes the food for each day and is displayed prominently for parents. QA 2.2.1
- If a child is not eating the food that is offered, it is usually found that the child is getting their nutritional needs met outside the service.
- We will make every effort to find elements of the daily menu that the child does like however if the menu is not suitable to the family we may suggest the family find a service where they can provide their own food.
- The Service maintains a list and photographs of children with special food requirements for health or medical reasons (e.g. allergies, intolerances). This information is displayed in the food preparation areas and strategically throughout the Service. Relief staff are informed of these dietary requirements when they begin their shift. QA 2.1.1, 2.3.2
- Meals served to children with dietary requirements/restrictions and allergies/intolerances are served on separate plates. QA 2.3.2
- Food is presented attractively. Pureed vegetables and fruit will be offered to younger children (0-2 years).
- The healthy eating message is promoted and positively reinforced amongst families through notice boards, newsletters, educator-parent meetings, the website and up-to-date materials from recognised authorities. QA 2.2.1
- Educators promote healthy eating in children by including the topic in routines and in other intentional teaching such as role-modelling, discussions, songs, stories, games, using different cultural meal settings, and cooking experiences. QA 2.2.1
- Meal times are relaxed, pleasant and unhurried. Educators sit and eat with the children, maintaining good personal nutrition, and talk with them on topics of interest, including, but not limited to, healthy food and nutrition. QA 2.2.1, 5.1.2
- Developmentally appropriate eating utensils and furniture are provided for each child. Children, including toddlers, are encouraged to be independent and develop social skills at meal times. QA 2.2.1
- Food is never used to reward or punish children. QA 2.2.1
- Children are encouraged to eat, but they are not required to taste new foods, to eat food they do not like or to eat more than they want. No child is to be ever force fed. QA 2.2.1

- Water bottles are readily accessible to children at all times, and educators encourage children to drink water at frequent intervals. Water bottles are refilled by the staff during the day, when required, from the kitchen or kitchenettes. QA 2.2.1
- Staff follow all regulatory requirements for preparing and serving food. These include handwashing, wearing gloves, using tongs to handle food, ensuring children do not share utensils or use those that have been dropped. (Refer to the *Service's Food Preparation, Storage and Handling Policy*). QA 2.1.3
- Parents are informed of their child's food and beverage intake in the Daily Feedback Sheet. Educators discuss face-to-face with parents any concerns about a child who has not eaten well. QA 2.2.1
- The centre's emphasis on fresh fruit & vegetables and reliance on foods without added sugar ensures that children's teeth are kept healthy.

(Source – Oral Health – Bundaberg District Health Service, 1998)

(Source – Awabakal Dental Kit, Newcastle, 2005.)

- Acorn Child Care provides nuts and nut products in some of the snacks and meals prepared. A variety of nuts are served in different meals which include Walnuts, Cashews, Almonds, Pecan, Brazilian and Peanuts. Other nuts may be included in meals at the cook's discretion. Some nuts are served in the way of pieces, chunks or slithers to children over the age of 3. Under the age of 3 the nuts are included in the meal as a puree form. If your child **does** have a nut allergy, this needs to be brought to the attention of the Director and an action plan from a doctor is required. All staff will be made aware of the child's condition. There is evidence that children are exposed to nuts early in life are less likely to develop a nut allergy. QA 6.1.1
- Babies are fed individually by educators. QA 2.2.1
- Birthdays are an important part of a child's life, and educators and children are encouraged to celebrate them at the Service. Parents are welcome to bring a cake to share. QA 2.2.1
- The Service provides staff with appropriate training in safe food handling. They are provided with current information on nutrition for young children, with special regard to cultural preferences. QA 2.1.3
- Parents are invited at any time to make suggestions regarding the existing menu and to provide the centre with specific nutritional requirements of their children. The centre management will decide if any particular diet is beyond the scope of our centre's resources. QA 6.1.2
- If the child has medical dietary requirements a doctors letter is required explaining what the exact dietary requirements are. Please note Acorn does not have the facility to support elimination diets.
- While our kitchen can cater to dietary requirements by ingredient, it is not a nut, soy, gluten, or dairy free facility. Trace amounts of these ingredients may be in any meal provided.
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Additional safe practices for babies

- Educators follow the Service's written Expressed Breast Milk (EBM) and Formula – Storing and Heating Procedure when storing and heating babies' bottles. QA 2.1.3, 2.2.1

Responsibilities of parents

- To provide the Service with details of their child's known food allergies at enrolment, and to inform the Service immediately any changes occur.
- To discuss their child's food allergies, if any, with them (older children) and to ensure they understand the importance of not sharing food.
- To not bring food or drinks other than water into the centre unless it is a cake for a child's birthday.

Links to other policies

- Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- Excursion Policy
- Injuries, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Medical Conditions Policy
- Student, Volunteers and Visitors Policy

Sources

- Better Health. (2013). *Breast milk – expressing*. http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Bottle_feeding_with_expressed_breast_milk accessed 24 November 2013
- Early Years Learning Framework 2009.
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011.
- Guide to the National Quality Standard 2011.
- Queensland Health. (n.d.). *Formula Feeding*. <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/ph/documents/childhealth/28107.pdf> accessed 24 November 2013

Further reading and useful websites

- Australian Breastfeeding Association – <https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/> accessed 24 November 2013
- Better Health Channel. (2011). *Fact sheet: Child care and healthy eating*. [http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcvpdf.nsf/ByPDF/Childcare_and_healthy_eating/\\$File/Childcare_and_healthy_eating.pdf](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcvpdf.nsf/ByPDF/Childcare_and_healthy_eating/$File/Childcare_and_healthy_eating.pdf) accessed 24 November 2013

- Nutrition Australia. (2009). *Get up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for early Childhood* http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/pdf/doha/Family_FT.pdf accessed 24 November 2013
- Nutrition Australia. (n.d.). *Factsheets for Healthy Eating* <http://www.nutritionaustralia.org/national/resources> accessed 24 November 2013
- Nutrition Australia – <http://www.nutritionaustralia.org/vic/nutrition-services-early-learning-centres> accessed 24 November 2013
- National Health and Medical Research Council. (2003). *The Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia incorporating The Infant Feeding Guidelines for Health Workers* http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/n34.pdf accessed 24 November 2013
- Queensland Health – <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/>
- Royal Children’s Hospital Melbourne – <http://www.rch.org.au/home/>

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